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KUALA LUMPUR: It was supposed to be a rally for electoral reforms. That it was politically motivated became abundantly clear in the course of the street demonstration in the Federal capital Saturday.

Shouts of "*reformasi*" filled the air, in reference to the movement that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim started after he was expelled from Umno and the government.

And if the role of the opposition in the gathering was not clear enough, there was the repeated call for "*hancurkan Barisan Nasional*" (destroy Barisan Nasional).

Pro-opposition and anti-government sentiment was loudly expressed wherever the demonstrators gathered – at the National Mosque, Masjid Jamek, Puduraya, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre and outside the Merdeka Stadium, among other locations.

Prof Datuk Dr Zainal Kling of the Sultan Idris Teaching University said the rally was staged under false pretences.

"The rally was billed as a civil societies affair, but it clearly had a political agenda," he said.

Observers said that the organisers seemed to have used children and very senior citizens "for effect".

They noticed that some of the children took the cue from the adults and shouted whatever the grown-ups shouted.

Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian of

Universiti Sains Malaysia said the rally was obviously planned by the opposition leaders for political mileage.

"It was the opposition leaders who were actually eager to have the rally," he said.

Lecturer Md Shukri Shuib of Universiti Utara Malaysia Md Shukri Shuib said the opposition was behind the rally which was to challenge the authority of the government and to incite people against it.

He said the organisers had spurned the offer of the government to hold the rally in a stadium outside the federal capital because the opposition parties behind the demonstration wanted to advance their agenda. – Bernama